



U.S. Department of Justice

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**UNITED STATES SETTLES CIVIL RIGHTS SUIT
AGAINST NEW YORK CITY PARKS DEPARTMENT**

DAVID N. KELLEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that the United States Government (the "Government") has settled a civil rights lawsuit it had brought against the City of New York and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation ("the Parks Department") in 2002 alleging that the Parks Department has engaged in discriminatory employment practices in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. A Consent Decree incorporating the terms of the settlement was approved today by United States District Judge DENNY CHIN.

In its lawsuit, the Government alleged that the Parks Department has engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination against its black and Hispanic employees on the basis of their race and/or national origin in making promotion decisions. Specifically, the Government charged that the Parks Department has discriminated against qualified black and Hispanic employees by systematically failing to provide a fair and open selection

process for promotions, and by routinely promoting whites into upper level positions by hand-picking them, without posting vacancies or following a competitive promotion process. The Parks Department denies the allegations.

Under the terms of the Consent Decree, the Parks Department has agreed to implement and maintain a policy requiring the internal posting of job vacancies to the entire Parks Department workforce, and the filling of those vacancies through a fair, competitive process. The Consent Decree also obligates the Parks Department, among other things, to make career counselors and supervisory training courses available to all Parks Department employees. The Decree further provides for a three-year period of monitoring and oversight by the Government to ensure that the Parks Department's promotions practices comply with federal law.

The Parks Department is responsible for operating more than 1,700 parks, playgrounds and recreation facilities throughout the five boroughs of New York City. Parks Department employees manage more than 28,000 acres of land, including ballfields, playgrounds, tennis courts, swimming pools, recreation centers, beaches, golf courses, ice rinks, major stadiums, and zoos. The Parks Department employs about 2,000 workers, approximately half of whom are black or Hispanic.

Mr. KELLEY stated: "The Government brought this action

to vindicate the fundamental right that employees have to equal opportunity in the workplace. That right is no less important in the public workplace than in the private workplace. We are pleased that the Parks Department, which provides such important services to the people of New York City, has taken significant steps to guarantee that none of its employees will be excluded from opportunities for advancement because of their race or ethnic background."

The Government's settlement with the Parks Department does not resolve a private lawsuit filed in 2001 by 11 black and Hispanic current and former Parks Department employees against the City of New York and former Parks Commissioner Henry J. Stern. That suit, Wright et al. v. Stern et al., asserts claims of employment discrimination under both state and federal law, and remains pending before Judge CHIN.

A copy of the Consent Decree is attached.

Assistant United States Attorneys NEIL CORWIN, LISA ZORNBERG, RAMON E. REYES, JR., and RUSSELL YANKWITT, are in charge of the Government's case.

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